THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) The exports of agricultural and allied products (excluding tea, coffee, raw cotton and marine products) were valued at Rs. 7049.04 crores and Rs. 13,336.68 crores during the years 1994-95 and 1995-96 respectively. Statewise export statistics are not maintained.

(c) and (d) Steps taken to enhance export of agricultural and allied products include simplification of inspection procedures, removal of minimum export price and quantity restrictions on selected items, provision of concessional credit, product development to meet international needs, extension of benefits available under the scheme of EOUs/ EPZs to agriculture sector and permitting 50% sale in the domestic tariff area, assistance to exporters for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control, air freight subsidy on export of selected horticultural, floricultural products and fresh vegetables to identified destinations, promoting export of identified products through brand promotion campaigns, arranging buyer-seller meets and participation in international fairs/exhibitions.

Expansion of WTO Agenda to include Labour

1766. SHIR VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the World Trade Organisation has expanded the agenda to include the labour issues;

(b) if so, whether Government have clarified its views on the issues; and

(c) the steps taken to mobilise the support of developing nations to protect their interest?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) No, Sir. However, some developed countries like USA and Norway have proposed that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) discuss the relationship between trade and core labour standards in the WTO.

(b) India has opposed this proposal.

(c) The matter was discussed with other developing countries in the preparatory Meeting to the Singapore Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in September 1996. In addition, India is continuously coordinating her position with other like minded countries in opposing such a linkage. The outcome on this issue will be decided at the WTO Singapore Ministerial Conference to be held from December 9—13, 1996.

Children Working in Hazardous Industries

1767. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of child labour in the country at present;

(b) the number of children working in hazardous industries in the country; and

(c) steps Government have taken to abolish child labour in the hazardous industries and the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) and (b) According to 1981 census, the total number of working children in India was 13.6 million. According to the 43rd round of National Sample Survey conducted in 1987-88 to total number of working children increased to 17.02 million. The date regarding the working children as per 1991 census are yet to be released. It is estimated that presently there would be around 20 million working children. Out of the total child labour population,

around 2 million children are estimated to be working in hazardous occupations and processes.

(c) Government has taken a number of steps for the rehabilitation of child labour. As part of the National Policy on Child Labour announced in 1987, project based action plan has been initiated in the areas of high concentration of child labour engaged in wage/quasi-wage employment. A major programme was announced in August, 1994 to rehabilitate child labour working in hazardous occupations. As a follow up of the programme, Government is presently engaged in the task of rehabilitation of about 2 million children, working in hazardous occupations by the year 2002. During 1995-96, 76 child labour projects were sanctioned for rehabilitation of around 1.5 lakh children working in hazardous occupations in 11 child labour endemic States. Under the project, the children are put on special schools where they are provided with basic need like non-formal education, vocational training, nutrition, withcare and stipend.

Increase in the Normative Cost of Sugar Factories

1768. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the normative cost of the sugar factories has increased after 1990; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (b) The Government has not prescribed any normative cost though the financial institutions while assessing the projects have been going by a certain standard taking into account the financing pattern and the prospect of return on capital. The financial institutions are generally concerned with the debt-equity ratio and the financial viability of the project. Since the State Governments contribute a large part of equity of the Cooperatives and also have to guarantee the loans, the question of availability of total finance for a particular unit has to be resolved between them, the cooperative and the financial institutions.

Benefits of Reservations to S.C. Converts to Christianity

1769. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a proposal to recognise Scheduled Caste converts to christianity as Scheduled Caste and thereby make them eligible for Scheduled Caste reservations is under the consideration of the Government;

(b) if so, the steps taken to implement that proposal; and

(c) the details of the present position?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The proposal is still under the consideration of the Government.

पंजाब में मान्यता प्राप्त औद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण केन्द्र

1770. श्री मोहिन्दर सिंह कल्याण: क्या उद्योग मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) पंजाब में 30 अक्तूबर, 1996 की स्थिति के अनुसार केन्द्रीय सरकार द्वारा मान्यता प्राप्त औद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण केन्द्रों का ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ख) आगामी छह महीनों के दौरान मान्यता प्रदान किये जाने वाले केन्द्रों की संख्या संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ग) सरकार के पास इस संबंध में लंबित पड़े आवेदन पत्रों की संख्या कितनी है तथा तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है; और

(घ) सभी आवेदनों पर क्या कार्रवाई की जा रही है?